

Hammer Family Has Run Machinery Company Since 1914

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The Chas. J. Hammer Machinery Co. located at 917 E. Main St., hasn't always been called that and hasn't always been located at 917 E. Main St.

The first home, established in 1914 was located where the present post office stands. It was owned in equal parts, by Charles J., his brother, Andrew, a third partner, Tom Goldsberry, and it was known as the Hammer Brothers Auto Repairs.

NEW QUARTERS

The first move took place in 1918. Charlie bought out his partners and moved to new quarters at 316 W. Center St., originally, the site of the Hammer family home. The business was renamed to Chas. J. Hammer Machinery Co., and reorganized to take on a line of automobiles, selling and servicing them.

In 1922 Charlie was hankering for his first love, the work he learned as a boy, making machinery work. He abandoned the automobile business and devoted his time to the ever-increasing demands of the agricultural development of the community. This proved to be a wise and logical choice.

The area around him was rapidly developing. Increasing use of acreage and a lowering water table, pressured demands for pumping supplies and services. The firm had begun to feel the pressure of need for more space, when the business literally "went up in smoke," as the saying goes, and panic was the order of the day. A truck load of pumps was arriving, and where to put them was the big question.

The only suitable vacancy in town was at 701 E. Main St., and they rented it as temporary quarters. This was in 1930 and they stayed there until 1933

when they moved to 917 E. Main St.

ORIGINAL PLANT

The original "plant" was a far cry from the present one at the same address. It was about the size of half of one of the six lots now covered by the company which has grown from a business family of three to 22, weathering two wars and a depression.

Now, to the "Hammers" past

Like Father, Like Son

and presently forging the destiny of the company.

Charles J. Hammer was born March 22, 1891, in Visalia. He loved Visalia and made it his life-long home. Charlie was one of four children, two boys and two girls. His father, Andrew, was a native of Austria and his mother, Katherine Barth Hammer was a native daughter, born in Willows, but "brought up" in Visalia.

When Charlie was eight years old his father died and Charlie found it necessary to grow up fast, and make a man of himself, which he did, with much credit to himself, his family, and the community in which he spent his lifetime.

MACHINERY

Charlie had a "bent," shall we say, for machinery. And the local cannery had about the most machinery of any place known to him, so, there is where he went for employment. He was hired, and in time became "the machinist." This work was seasonal, and not enough for Charlie's needs so he took full-time employment as the mechanic in charge of the farming machinery and pump department of Goldstein and Iseman, a Visalia merchandising firm, where he worked until starting his own business as already related.

Charles Hammer was endowed with a great degree of diligence, enthusiasm, and a will to work, all of which are reflected in his personal, as well as his community and business history. He served the community for eight years as a member of the city council, and two years as Mayor.

He was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, serving on its Highway and Natural Resources Committee, and was a member of the same committee of the San Joaquin Valley Council of the State Chamber of Commerce. He was president of the Visalia Sportsmen's Association for eight years.

MOOSE ACTIVITY

His loyal and complete devotion to the Loyal Order of Moose, took him to the top of that order. He was Governor of the Visalia Lodge, three different times — 1937, 1939 and 1951. He was a member of the Second, Third and Fellowship degrees of the order, Legion

of the Moose, and President of the California State Moose Association. For his devotion to the welfare of the Order, the Child City of Mooseheart bestowed on him its highest degree, The Pilgrim's Degree of Honor.

He was a life member of Visalia Elks No. 1298 and served as exalted ruler in 1945-46. He was a member of the Visalia Rotary Club; fathered the Visalia Rodeo, now sponsored by his much loved Moose Lodge;

he was a co-founder of organized baseball for Visalia, and one of the founders of the old Tulare County National Bank.

His hobbies were hunting, fishing and the great outdoors, which he used to the fullest. He hunted in Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Nevada and Alaska. He fished in Mexico and to the delight of his many fishing companions, at Mineral King, where the Hammer cabin became the annual meeting place of the Mineral King Stags

Club 42 years ago, and where his leadership is commemorated annually by the remaining members.

Hammer was married in 1913 to Alice St. Clair, a Visalia native whose father was a farmer from Virginia. Her mother was a native of Tulare County, born near Farmersville.

TWO CHILDREN

Two children were born to the Hammers: a daughter, Bea-trice, and a son, Harold, and because of how it is, this "Like

Father-Like Son" story has to be "Like Father, Like Daughter and Like Son."

So ladies first. "Bea" Hammer Cochrun was born in Farmersville and by interesting coincidence, on the same farm where her mother and grandmother were born. And, she was born Oct. 17, 1914, the same year the business was started.

Bea attended Visalia schools, between times, skipping bells and doing routine office chores in her dad's business to earn her pin money. She was graduated from Visalia Union High School in 1933 and attended Junior College for half a year before going to Fashion Art School in San Francisco in 1935 where she learned the arts of glove-making and millinery.

After college, she worked at a millinery shop in San Jose for a year and a half, came back to Visalia and worked in a dress shop for a couple of years before marrying George I. Cochrun of the county surveyor's department, Nov. 11, 1939. George has been with the County 32 years.

The Cochruns have two sons. Larry, who was a Coast Guard graduate in 1965, spent four years with the Guard, followed that by enrolling at the University of California at Santa Barbara where he is working toward a degree in electrical engineering. He is married and lives in Santa Barbara. The second son, Charles, has a health impairment, and is hospitalized.

INCORPORATION

Hammer Machinery Co. was incorporated in 1948 and Bea became secretary-treasurer and came back to full-time work in September 1952. Her membership chores and hobbies, plus the business, keep her time well-filled. She is a member of Visalia Soroptimists, Kaweah BPWC, Visalia Emblem Club and is past president of all of them. She is parliamentarian for Kaweah BPWC and the Emblem Club. She is a 50-year member of the Visalia Unified Methodist Church and was superintendent of its kindergarten class for 15 years. She was also the second president of Highland PTA. She and her husband were members of the Parent's Group while Larry was at the Coast Guard Academy.

Her hobbies are playing and teaching bridge, knitting and sewing. She has retained her artistic touch by illustrating the Emblem Club bulletin for the last 20 years and editing the Kaweah BPWC bulletin. She is a member of Exeter Chamber

of Commerce, and is secretary-treasurer of the Mineral King Stags. She attended one meeting for the purpose of receiving a plaque in recognition of her services, past, present and future, but since then, she says her presence at the meetings has been unneeded and apparently unwanted, so she contents herself by keeping check on their financial affairs and notifying the members of the times of meetings.

Harold Hammer, though he didn't suspect it at the time, started his career for Hammer Machinery Co. management and vice presidency, at age 14 on the wash rack, cleaning up "those darned old pumps." He was graduated from Jefferson School in 1930, Visalia Union High School in 1934 and Junior College in 1937. That extra year? Well, he suffered a football injury and just "messed around" for a year. Why fool around with school, when you can't play football?

Following junior college, he attended Fresno State, finished at Heald's Engineering College in San Francisco, in 1940. He never got around to writing his thesis, so Heald's never got around to issuing him a degree. Harold has been much too busy to figure out whether it has made any real difference. The fact did not keep him from getting a 5-cents an hour bonus in pay at Douglas Aircraft in 1940 for being college trained where he worked until January 1946 as an assembly jig and fixture designer.

'GOT MESSAGE'

Early in 1946, Harold heard from Dad, who to put it briefly and to the point, said, "Come back here, young man, and go to work." Harold got the message, came back and went to work, Feb. 1, 1946. Whether father knew best, or not, father knew, so he said, all along that Harold belonged in the Hammer Machinery Co. organization. He knew and believed it so strong-

ly, that he had formed a partnership back in 1944, making Harold a partner.

He now is president of the company.

Harold Hammer was born at 718 S. Church St. in Visalia, July 25, 1916, just a block away from where his father was born, 25 years earlier on Court Street.

Harold Hammer and Jo Linnell were married in 1941. Jo is the daughter of real Visalia pioneer natives. Her parents were Joseph Stimson (Timp) Linnell and Mattie Brundage Linnell, daughter of T. J. Brundage and a niece of Oscar Brundage of Farmersville. Jo still owns the ranch across the road from Linnell Camp which figured prominently in Tulare County depression history and was visited by Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. It still exists as a low rent housing project.

Harold and Jo have three sons, David, 28; Daniel, 22, and Douglas, 20. So far, none of them is in the business.

'OLD BLOCK'

Harold's hobbies show him as a chip off the old block. They are hunting and fishing, and he and his dad had the pleasure of hunting together in Montana and Wyoming. He succeeded his father as host of the Mineral King Stags in June 1964 following his father's death in January of the same year.

Harold is a member of the Visalia Elks and Moose lodges, Visalia Rotary Club and Chamber of Commerce. He served on the 1967-68 Tulare County Grand Jury, and spent eight years on the Three Rivers School Board. The Harold Hammers live in Three Rivers and he is a daily commuter to Visalia.



Basis Of The Business

Bea Cochrun and Harold Hammer, children of the late Charles J. Hammer, surrounded by parts of a disassembled water pump, carry on the business started by their father. — Times-Delta Photo by Jerry Hancock